

The following reports were read and referred to the Publication Committee:—

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT.

Several events in the history of the Academy have occurred during the year just closed which are worthy of notice or record.

On the 4th of January, 1876, the Society met in its hall at the northwest corner of Broad and Sansom Streets for the last time. It had been domiciled there since February 18, 1840, a period of very nearly thirty-six years. It held its first meeting in the north wing of the new edifice on Tuesday evening, January 11th. Possession of the old building was transferred to the purchaser the next day.

At the close of the sixty-fifth year since its foundation the Society may be justly congratulated on the progress it has made, in the extension of its museum and library, on the work recorded in its publications, and on the value of the real estate which it has acquired through the generosity of very many friends. It possesses a commodious fire-proof building (which is the north wing of the proposed structure), and a plot of ground upon which it can be extended. The Academy is free from debt, and its settled policy is to incur no pecuniary obligation before means to cancel it have been provided.

It seems not unreasonable to conjecture that the Society may be found occupying this same locality at the close of the second century of the nation, still endeavoring, under the benevolent precept *non sibi sed omnibus*, to acquire knowledge of the sensible creation and to diffuse it by all means at its command.

The propriety of representing the Academy through an exhibit of its publications, etc., in the International Exhibition, was suggested February 15th, and the committee then appointed—Dr. John L. LeConte and Messrs. Charles E. Smith and Wm. S. Vaux—reported substantially, March 7th, that it was inexpedient, and was discharged from further consideration of the subject.

The formal transfer of the building and site upon which it stands by the trustees of the building fund, in accordance with their suggestion, was postponed for the time, by a resolution adopted March 14th.

Under authority of a resolution of May 9th, an invitation to visit the museum and library as frequently as might be agreeable to them during their sojourn in the city was given to the commissioners accredited to the International Exhibition as well as to members and delegates of societies and associations which met in Philadelphia in the course of the year.

On specified conditions it was agreed, November, 1875, that the American Entomological Society should be received into the Academy, and on the 16th of May the report that the Entomological Section of the Academy had been organized, was made, in pursuance of a provision of the by-laws.

May 30th an application of members of the Society to form the Botanical Section of the Academy was approved, and the report that its organization had been completed was made June 20th.

The association of members occupied in a special branch of study into sections, besides being a source of gratification to them, is useful to the Academy. The collections placed in charge of the sections receive their particular care, and the Curators of the Academy are so far relieved from the necessity of giving special attention to their preservation and arrangement.

At present the Academy includes four sections, namely:—

The Biological and Microscopical Section.¹

The Conchological Section.²

The Entomological Section.³

The Botanical Section.⁴

All members and correspondents of the Academy have the privilege of being present at the stated meetings of the sections.

August 31, 1875, the Council was requested to examine the by-laws and report such changes as may be necessary for the better government of the Academy. The Council deliberated long on the subject and recommended several important modifications. The series of amendments proposed by the Council were considered and debated at several meetings of the Academy, altered in many particulars, and finally adopted May 30th of the present year.

In conformity to one of these laws, on the 16th of May, twelve

¹ Stated meeting on the first Monday evening of every month.

² Stated meeting on the first Thursday evening of every month.

³ Stated meeting, second Thursday evening of every month.

⁴ Stated meeting, second Monday evening of every month.

conseillers were elected, four for three years, four for two years, and four for one year.

Since the adoption of the new laws sufficient time has not yet elapsed to test satisfactorily their practical working. Some of the elder members of the Society doubt whether the changes made will prove to be better in practice than the displaced legal requirements. Perfection in by-laws of a society cannot be reasonably expected. The ordinary progress of events and changed conditions renders a modification of them from time to time desirable; and there is always ground for honest difference of opinion. Even the Constitution, the organic law of the United States, formed by the wisest and most judicious minds in the country, has been found, during the experience of a century, to require amendments.

In reference to one important feature of the new by-laws, I venture to make a few comments which I hope may not be considered out of place.

To the extent of its means the Society endeavors to diffuse information of what is known within the field of its labors, to increase the popular taste for natural science, and to assist those engaged in original investigations by granting to them the free use of its library and museum, and by publishing the results of their labors, in its Journal and Proceedings.

The Academy desires to extend the usefulness of its library and museum in this direction, and to project paths among the unknown things of the earth which men may pursue and retrace, always bringing back a revelation of some fact not previously known. It is believed that there are many men eminently qualified in all respects to engage in original research, whose scientific work is greatly restricted because almost all their time is necessarily spent in gaining a livelihood, who, like the Davys, Faradays, Huxleys, and Tyndalls of the Royal Institution, would gladly accept a moderate support of assured continuance, and in return for it devote all their energies to scientific investigations and teaching.

In the hope of increasing the number of original investigators by providing places for men of this character, and of securing systematic elementary and popular instruction by courses of lectures and otherwise, the Academy has modified its by-laws in such manner as to authorize the appointment of professors and assistant professors.

The plan is commendable, and its realization should be encouraged by the friends of scientific progress; but to realize it completely in all its details requires in the aggregate a very large sum of money.

In the present condition of the Academy's resources, the objection to this scheme is that to appoint professors before providing a laboratory in which they may pursue their investigations; or a lecture-room for the accommodation of those who would listen to their teachings; or means for their permanent and entire support, would be merely to bestow complimentary titles, without advancing the interests of original research in any manner or degree. Gentlemen elected to professorships without income would not find in the title of professor alone the means of living. Such title would not relieve them from the necessity of giving their time and labor to some exacting vocation in exchange for daily bread, nor afford them more leisure than they may possess without it. Those devoted to original investigation who are pecuniarily independent of secular employment do not need the assistance which hoped-for endowments are designed to give. As the library and museum are accessible to all for the purpose of study, they are in condition to pursue their scientific labors without acquiring the title of professor from the Academy.

The by-laws indicate that each professor will have exclusive control of such collections as may be assigned to his care, and be responsible for their arrangement, increase, and preservation. For partial or entire neglect of this very important duty, there seems to be no remedy of easy administration as long as it is confided to any one who has no right to compensation for his time and labor from the Academy. Where pecuniary consideration for services to be rendered is in any manner contingent upon their performance, there is an obvious and efficacious remedy for neglect.

If such objections have any force, they suggest that the interests of the Academy, and of science, will be best served by postponing the election of professors until after substantial endowments for their support have been secured. Until these are acquired the collections may be still properly confided, as they always have been, to the custody of the four curators, under whose care they have attained their present condition and magnitude, and in the mean time the Academy may continue its efforts to develop and make useful its resources.

The Emperor of Brazil, who is distinguished as much by his varied learning as by his high political position, was present at the stated meeting of the Society, held June 27.

On the evening of July 7, the gentlemen officially connected with the International Exhibition, and many others, were received and entertained in the Academy, the entire expense being borne by several generous members of the Society.

In August, Professor Huxley was invited, in anticipation of his coming to Philadelphia, to be present at the meetings of the Society, but he regretted his inability to accept the invitation. He arrived in the city about two o'clock P. M. of Thursday, Sept. 14, and spent two or three hours of the afternoon in the museum. The next afternoon he departed for New York.

At the instance of the Centennial Commission, a committee was appointed Oct. 10, "to investigate and report upon the introduction of new species of insects and plants through the medium of foreign exhibits at the Centennial Exhibition."

The report in relation to the introduction of insects, by Drs. J. L. Le Conte, Geo. H. Horn, and Joseph Leidy, was made Nov. 14. The labors of the botanists of the committee are necessarily deferred until the ensuing spring; the results of their observations cannot be expected until some time next year.

The stated meetings of the Society in the new locality, contrary to the anticipation of some of the members, have been more numerous attended than those in the old hall, and have been no less interesting.

In behalf of the council I have to report that its stated meetings have been regularly held, and the matters submitted to it have been carefully considered.

Respectfully, etc.,

W. S. W. RUSCHENBERGER.

REPORT OF RECORDING SECRETARY.

During the twelve months ending Nov. 30, 1876, ninety members and nineteen correspondents have been elected.

Announcement was made of the death of two members—J. S. Phillips and Geo. Washington Smith.

Twenty-seven papers have been presented for publication, as follows: Wm. H. Dall, three; Wm. M. Gabb, three; Edw. D.